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Buenos Aires, Argentina

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February 27, 1979

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Mr. Patrick J. Flood
Department of State
HA/HR
Washington, D.C.

Dear Pat:

Thanks for your letter. I am pleased that my telegrams and Memcons are useful. I had hoped to clear my Memcon backlog before leaving for a one-week fishing trip on March 5, however, the Labor CERP report has been the major typing effort this week and a number of Memcons will have to await my return. The IACHR visit is producing a flood of information. This last week I received two first person reports of a Buenos Aires interrogation facility which is reportedly still in operation. Another report from our FOWG Desk Officer that the Ministry of Interior is now plowing through 1,500 cases presented to the GOA by the IACHR. Our FOWG man says that the Commission will be able to visit any place in Argentina, if, repeat if, they give the government advance notice. The government will insist that the IACHR visit the Navy Mechanic's School, and the Army's Campo de Mayo and other well known spots. A diplomatic colleague told me that one of his nationals was held late last year in a clandestine facility in Buenos Aires with between 200 and 300 other prisoners. As luck would have it, this individual grew up three blocks from the Army facility where she was clandestinely detained. She recognized the shapes of the buildings' roofs, the walls, and the neighborhood noises. Included in these Memcons are several references to "granjas de reeducación"--a new and explosive theme.

Also on tap is my third try at an analysis of the GOA's targeting against leftist political parties and groups. We have received indications from military contacts that a shift of focus in taking place within the anti-subversive program.

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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More effort is to be directed at "communist and socialist" subversives (the word socialist is new). Other contacts have described intelligence efforts directed at labor and church targets.

My personal thesis is that there is a serious policy dispute within the military leadership between the hardliners (Suarez Mason, Menendez and friends) and what I call "the firmliners" (Videla, Viola and company). The former strongly believe that all vestiges of subversion must be radically removed from Argentine society to ensure the success of the military's revolution. The firmliners on the other hand, believe in selective targeting and weighing the political benefits against the political costs of the anti-subversive program. There are no "softliners" who wish to stop the repression completely.

One additional theme which I should mention before I begin floating feathers and hooks down cold mountain streams is that the IACHR visit is having a bigger impact within the GOA than I first imagined. We have reported the changes which are underway regarding recognized prisoners--better treatment and standards plus bookkeeping changes to reduce the PEN numbers. We have also reported that the GOA plans to stonewall on the desaparecidos (which in the Argentine military jargon means "the dead").

The new issue appears to be what to do about the clandestine prisoners. I and everyone here had gone along with a single sourced Army intelligence estimate that there were less than 500 clandestine prisoners. New information regarding the "granjas," two large Buenos Aires facilities plus known Navy and Army retraining facilities add up to close to 500. This does not take into account facilities such as the Campo de Mayo and provincial facilities. The GOA has got to decide what, if anything, to do with these clandestine prisoners. MinInt's Col. San Roman recently hinted that his Ministry was urging the government to recognize the present prisoners and declare publicly that they had no more.

The clandestine prisoner issue is the bomb within the Argentine human rights situation. It is an issue which the Commission's visit will force the GOA to at least debate. Information is too widely held in Argentina for the government to believe that it could survive a thorough visit without

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some credible information surfacing regarding clandestine prisoners. Of course, these prisoners are the center of the hopes of all desaparecidos' families.

I was very pleased to hear of your visit plans. A visit in early April would be fine. Everyone will be back from vacation and hard at work; plus your visit would be far enough ahead of the May 28 IACHR visit not to cause any confusion. The two goals you outline in your visit are of equal importance. You will need at least a good busy week here.

I am familiar with the case Victor Boichenko's son. I have just presented the case to the FOWG. Disappearances from early 1976 in Cordoba have little chance of being alive. Sad business.

We have presented inquiries on both of Dr. Poce's sons to the FOWG. Dr. Poce's contacts with some military officers regarding the whereabouts of his son, who disappeared in December, have not worked out. Meanwhile, he has made arrangements for his son's wife and his grandchild to resettle in France. I was able to help in a small way in that resettlement.

Our general rule with respect to FOWG inquiries is to require an expression of interest from the U.S. However, when the family demonstrates a strong U.S. connection, we do not delay, but submit the FOWG request immediately. A life is at stake. In a number of cases, especially those where the report is received immediately after the abduction, we make special inquiries through our military contacts. We cannot demonstrate that either our FOWG or special contacts have resulted in the reappearance of an abducted person, but neither can we demonstrate the contrary.

Thanks again for your good letter. I do look forward to your visit. I promise you that we will work hard and play hard. Bring your tennis shoes and your knife and fork. We will squeeze in some sailing and a number of good meals.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

F.A.H.
F. Allen Harris
Political Officer

cc: The Ambassador
Mr. Brayshaw

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